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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000114

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SUBJECT: SRSG ANNABI ON MINUSTAH'S EXPANDED MANDATE,
PRIORITY FOR 2008 AND WORKING WITH PREVAL

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 102

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson, reason 1.5(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary and Comment. During the past week, UN SRSG Hedi Annabi has outlined MINUSTAH's priorities for 2008 and his key objectives. Consistent with the broader MINUSTAH mandate approved in UNSCR 1780, the organization has moved swiftly to address border issues, deploying MINUSTAH forces at four major border crossings. At the request of President Preval, MINUSTAH will provide technical experts for the supplementary courts that Preval intends to set up for so-called "blood-crimes" (reftel). Although Annabi included completion of the delayed senatorial elections on his agenda, he has been reluctant thus far to interject MINUSTAH into what some Core Group ambassadors argue is essentially a Haitian issue. That being said, he has now agreed to raise the matter with Preval. Annabi has begun to establish a solid working relationship with Preval, but finds the Haitian president alternatively difficult and diffident. End summary and comment.

¶2. (C) In two meetings in early January, a one-on-one breakfast with the Ambassador and later in a private Core Group Ambassadors' meeting, UN SRSG Hedi Annabi outlines MINUSTAH'S priorities for the new year. HE noted that MINUSTAH has moved swiftly to address its new UNSC mandate responsibilities of helping protect Haiti's borders. Although he characterized the UN actions as "modest" in nature, Annabi reports that MINUSTAH troops have deployed at the four major border crossings of Ouanaminthe, Belladere, Malpass and Anse-a-Pitres. Beginning in mid-December, MINUSTAH forces, working with the HNP, started manning static border posts, conducting joint patrols, and undertaking air surveillance of the border regions. At Malpass, MINUSTAH will help the GOH construct a permanent multi-agency border control facility. The two sides have identified a warehouse 5 kilometers from the border to house the HNP, GOH customs and immigration and MINUSTAH. Once that facility is finished, MINUSTAH will co-locate with GOH entities. The UNSRSG noted that the GOH approach to the borders is still disorganized; for instance, it was clear that the Departments of Customs and Immigration have yet to talk to each other in any detail about co-location.

¶3. (C) MINUSTAH now has limited presence at the ports of Port-au-Prince, Cap Haitien and Les Cayes. UN officials function primarily as consultants at those sites. Plans to deploy 16 patrol boats along Haiti's southern and western coasts have run into delays, Annabi observed. The Uruguayan government had originally agreed to purchase the craft, but

discussions with the manufacturers in Florida stalled when a Russian company came forth with a better offer. No contract has yet been signed, Annabi reported in some frustration.

¶4. (C) Annabi noted that he had had an excellent reception during his consultations last month in the Dominican Republic. Given the inaccessibility of the southern most Haitian border crossing of Anse-a-Pitres - the road is virtually non-existent on the Haitian side - Dominican authorities have tentatively agreed to permit the UN to supply its troops in the area by the road on the DR side. Final approval from President Fernandez is expected momentarily, although Annabi notes that the president is in the middle of an election campaign which may affect the timing of any decision.

¶5. (C) Annabi confirmed that the UN will provide technical assistance to the special courts that President Preval intends to establish to handle the so-called blood crimes, notably kidnapping and murder, as outlined in reftel. Discussions are currently underway to define the GOH's needs and MINUSTAH expects to have advisors either on the ground or in route by the President's self-imposed deadline of June.

¶6. (C) While Annabi expressed concern about the continued delay in mounting the senatorial elections, he took a conservative approach to the matter in our discussions. In part, this reluctance to engage stems from an emerging split among the Core Group ambassadors on elections. While we, the Canadians and the French argue strongly for the international community to engage Preval to set a date and resolve internal differences among the CEP members and the Director General, some of our colleagues - notably the Chilean and Argentinean

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Ambassadors - argue that this is a Haitian issue well beyond our purview. With a Haitian government in place, they contend, MINUSTAH's role in elections becomes a very limited one. Annabi appears willing to take a broader view, but he seems reluctant to press hard in light of the Latin pushback. (Note. Brazil's ambassador, normally a strong supporter of energetic engagement has been on leave for two months and has missed most of this debate; he is usually able to convince his Latin colleagues to go along. End note.) Nonetheless, Annabi has agreed to raise elections with Preval at their next meeting.

¶7. (C) Privately, Annabi said that he has begun to establish a solid working relationship with President Preval, but that he finds it a bit of a slog. The UN leadership meets with the president once every week to ten days. Annabi goes to the presidency accompanied by his two deputies and often his political counselor and force commander. Preval is often alone. The President is alternatively difficult and argumentative or diffident, Annabi reports. For instance, he dithered for days on whether he would go to Gonaives for Independence Day, only deciding 3 days before, giving the UN little time to arrange appropriate support. The SRSG told me that he is surprised at the president's inability to delegate - and his cavalier approach to many of his engagements. That being said, Annabi noted with pleasure Preval's favorable comments about MINUSTAH during his speech at the opening of parliament.

SANDERSON